

## **Summary of 9-25-12 interview of Sedrick Mitchell**

Interview and summary by Thomas M. Patton, Deputy Attorney General

Since 1999 Sedrick Mitchell has served as deputy director of external affairs for the California Department of Parks and Recreation. In that role Mitchell oversees the Department's human rights office, which handles equal employment investigations. Mitchell also oversees the Department's community involvement and outreach programs, as well as its grants and local services office. (Sedrick Mitchell transcript (SMtr), pp. 2-3.) Previously, Mitchell worked as a district chief for Senator Patrick Johnston. (SMtr, pp. 3-4.)

As a deputy director, Mitchell is a member of the Department's "small" executive committee of core managers, which also includes the director and chief deputy director, and he is also a member of the "large" executive committee which includes representatives from the Office of Historic Preservation and others who Mitchell could not specifically recall. Mitchell stated he has attended such executive meetings weekly during his entire time at Parks, and that the only budget conversations he recalled concerned a lack of funds and the need to make cut-backs. (SMtr, pp. 6-7.) Mitchell advised that no one ever mentioned in an executive committee meeting anything about undisclosed monies or reserve funds. Mitchell indicated he would have recalled any such conversation since his budget has been reduced consistently since 1999. (SMtr, pp- 7-8.)

Mitchell stated it was the 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> of July, 2012, when he first learned about the issue of disparities in financial reports submitted by Parks to the Controller's Office and the Department of Finance. He learned of the issue during a phone conversation with then-director Ruth Coleman concerning another issue. At the end of the conversation, Coleman told Mitchell another story was coming out about unreported funds. (SMtr, p. 9.) Mitchell recalled that Coleman sounded very stressed and said the story would not be good. Coleman told Mitchell the under-reported amount could be as high as \$70 million dollars, that she didn't know anything about it, and that her administrative services deputy had not told her about it. Mitchell indicated he was shocked and speechless. (SMtr, p. 10.)

Mitchell did not know how and when Coleman learned about the matter, and Mitchell reiterated that Coleman told him it had not been reported to her. Mitchell was floored and devastated by the news, as the Department had been preparing to close seventy parks and had been soliciting the public for help. (SMtr, p. 11.)

Mitchell indicated anything else he has learned about the matter he learned from reading the newspaper. (SMtr, p. 13.) Mitchell recalled that Coleman did inform him that the Department could not have spent the money without going to the Department of Finance and the Legislature in order to obtain spending authority. (SMtr, pp. 13-14.)

Mitchell stated he has never had any conversations with anyone in the Department who claims to have known of the unreported funds, and he has not had any discussions with either Manuel Lopez or Michael Harris since they left their respective positions. (SMtr, pp. 14-15.)